

Ageing

ACT Labor is building a better city and a stronger community for Canberrans of all ages. Our commitment to, and investment in, services for older Canberrans has resulted in a range of improvements in the areas of housing, transport, health care, community services and recreation.

ACT Labor has invested \$10 million a year in a 48-bed dedicated unit for older patients at Calvary Public, incorporating rehabilitation services and mental health services.

We have increased the supply of land to allow for more aged-care residential services to be developed. Since coming to office the ACT Labor Government has released land for 900 aged-care beds and overseen the delivery of more than 400 beds, with another 280 scheduled to open in 2009.

Our health system is a key element of our services for older Canberrans. ACT Labor has boosted elective surgeries, including cataract, hip and knee surgery, to nearly 10,000 a year – an increase of 40%.

ACT Labor is committed to consulting older Canberrans on the issues that are important to them. We have established a highly successful Ministerial Advisory Council on Ageing, which draws on the expertise of peak bodies, industry and the community to advise the Government.

To help older Canberrans get around the city, particularly to appointments or activities, ACT Labor has invested heavily in improving the ACTION bus network. We have extended half-price bus travel for seniors to all routes and all times and have funded community mini-buses to provide on-demand travel for older Canberrans who have difficulty accessing public transport. Canberrans over 75 can now travel for free at any time with an ACTION Gold Card.

The Canberra community is ageing faster than most other Australian cities. That is why ACT Labor is building a city for all ages, a city that extends to every Canberran the opportunity to be fully engaged in the life of the community, whatever their age and whatever their capacity.

ACT Labor is responding energetically and creatively to the ageing of the population, to ensure that as a community we are ready for the future.

Jon Stanhope
Chief Minister

Katy Gallagher
Deputy Chief Minister
Minister for Health

A Proud Record of Support for Older Canberrans

ACT Labor has worked hard to create a city where all older Canberrans are housed in accommodation that is affordable and appropriate to their needs as well as a society where all older Canberrans are able to participate fully in the economic, intellectual and social life of our community.

ACT Labor is making a record investment in rebuilding our public health system in preparation for the demands of the coming years. ACT Labor will be ready for future demands on our public hospitals and other health facilities, because we are starting to prepare for that future today.

Our investment in the health system along with improvements to housing options, transport services and community support, has ensured older people are fully included in the life of the Canberra community.

Our Record

Since it was elected the ACT Labor Government has:

- Invested \$10 million a year in a 48-bed dedicated unit for older patients at Calvary Public, incorporating rehabilitation and mental health services;
- Released land for 900 aged-care beds and overseen the delivery of more than 400 beds, with another 280 scheduled to open in 2009. In the six years before ACT Labor was elected only 14 aged care beds were delivered over the entire period. Labor has revolutionised the delivery of aged care beds through the creation of a bank of development-ready land and case management of developments;
- Boosted elective surgeries to nearly 10,000 a year, benefiting older Canberrans in need of cataract surgery and hip and knee surgery;
- Established a highly successful Ministerial Advisory Council on Ageing, which draws on the expertise of peak bodies, industry and the community to advise the Minister on issues concerning older Canberrans. Initiatives of the Council include the Silver Lining Project, in collaboration with the ACT and Region Chamber of Commerce, which promotes the employment of older workers;
- Improved transportation options for older Canberrans including extending half-price bus travel for seniors to all routes and all times, including peak periods, and funded community mini-buses to provide on-demand travel for older Canberrans who have difficulty accessing public transport;
- Introduced grandparental leave for ACT public servants, allowing them to take a total of 52 weeks leave in the first three years of a grandchild's life;
- Introduced the Canberra Gold Awards, to recognise those who have contributed to Canberra's life and development for more than 50 years;
- Introduced fortnightly payments to compensate ACT public servants aged over 70 for the loss of compulsory employer superannuation contributions;

- Implemented a strategy to address financial, physical, sexual and psychological abuse of older Canberrans, with the establishment of an information and referral line, fact sheets and an awareness campaign; and

Allocated 150sqm in the refurbished Cook Community centre as a base for the activities of the University of the Third Age — part of Labor's \$29.6 million Revitalising Our Community program.

In the most recent ACT Budget 2008/09 the ACT Labor Government has:

- Abolished stamp duty for the next three years for pensioners wanting to sell up and move to accommodation more appropriate to their changing needs. The initiative is available for properties up to the median price – currently \$412,000;
- Allowed all Canberrans aged over 75 to travel on ACTION buses for free, on production of an ACTION Gold Card;
- Funded the purchase of over 100 wheelchair-accessible buses;
- Invested \$24.6 million in regional community facilities and six new neighbourhood halls to foster community inclusion at the suburban level;
- Funded a 16-bed intensive care and high-dependency unit at Calvary Public;
- Funded a new Community health Centre at Gungahlin, at a cost of \$18 million;
- Funded 24 more hospital beds;
- Funded a new cardiac catheter laboratory;
- Extended palliative care, with a focus on those Canberrans in residential aged care facilities; and
- Extended water concessions to Centrelink Health Care cardholders.

Moving Forward

Seniors Clubs

Engagement in the life of the community is important at all stages of life and has positive impacts on health and happiness. That is why ACT Labor is building a community for all ages.

Seniors Clubs are important avenues for engagement for many thousands of older Canberrans and their contribution to the richness of our community life is valued by ACT Labor.

The newest of these clubs is the Tuggeranong 55+ Club, formed as the result of scoping work funded by an ACT Government grant.

A re-elected ACT Labor Government will fund a \$1.6 million permanent home for the Tuggeranong 55+ Club - the only Seniors Club currently without a permanent clubhouse.

ACT Labor will also develop a priority list for future capital works for other Seniors Clubs, to ensure that these facilities continue to serve the needs of their growing memberships, and that these investments are fairly scheduled.

New housing options

As our community ages, more Canberrans will make the choice to relocate to retirement villages or other residential aged care facilities.

A re-elected ACT Labor Government will explore avenues for legislating to protect the financial and other rights of Canberrans purchasing homes in retirement villages, including the rights of those who seek to leave such villages. These laws will build on work and community consultation already begun by ACT Labor MLA Ms Mary Porter.

Housing affordability has been a policy priority of the ACT Labor Government over recent years.

The ACT Labor Government's nation-leading Housing Affordability Action Plan has addressed affordability through a suite of more than 60 separate initiatives, covering everything from land release to institutional investment in rental accommodation.

Initiatives that are already delivering benefits to older Canberrans include compact blocks, house-and-land packaged valued at between \$200,000 and \$300,000 in all new estates, stamp duty exemptions for pensioners downsizing into accommodation more appropriate to their needs, and a massive growth in independent living units and supported accommodation, through the creation of a bank of development-ready land, direct grants and case-management of developments.

Two former school sites, at Rivett and Mt Neighbour, have been identified for residential aged care and supported accommodation. Community access to both sites will be guaranteed as part of any sale.

A re-elected ACT Labor Government will redouble its efforts, with a focus on diverse affordable accommodation options for older Canberrans — especially those on modest incomes.

It will explore, report on and implement, in collaboration with industry and the community, innovative options for providing affordable and appropriate accommodation for an ageing population, including 'virtual villages', group houses, and other options for ageing in the community.

Grandparents – Primary Caring in the Prime of Life

Across Australia, there are more than 22,000 households in which grandparents are the primary carers of their grandchildren. Two-thirds of these households depend on a pension or benefits as their main source of income.

ACT Labor knows that grandparents play a vital role in their grandchildren's upbringing and we are seeing more and more grandparents taking on primary care responsibilities for children. Whilst there are some programs funded to provide support to grandparents we believe a dedicated service run by a non-government organisation is needed to provide information, advice and support to grandparents and kinship carers who are caring for children. A re-elected ACT Labor Government will commit \$800,000 over four years for a grandparents' support service. This new service will help grandparents navigate the service system across governments and across the community sector.

The incidence of grandparents living as primary carers for their grandchildren is particularly high among Indigenous families. A re-elected ACT Labor Government will invest an additional \$120,000 and work with the local Indigenous community to design and implement a program to better support grandparents – in particular grandmothers - who are primary carers for their grandchildren. Depending on consultation, elements of the program might include respite, social events, playgroups, assistance with transport, homework clubs and sporting activities.

Preserving Golden Stories

Since the ACT Labor Government instituted the Canberra Gold Awards in 2005, thousands of Canberrans who have devoted more than 50 years of their lives to the national capital have been recognised through the Awards – an initiative of the Canberra Social Plan.

The Canberra Gold Awards are made each year, during Canberra's birthday celebrations in March, and are a highlight of the birthday celebrations.

A re-elected ACT Labor Government will commit \$20,000 a year for three years to preserve a selection of these stories in the form of oral histories. These will build to create a lasting repository of Canberra's early decades, for future generations of Canberrans to treasure.

Seniors Card – in print

A re-elected ACT Labor Government will commit \$60,000 in this financial year to the Council on the Ageing to allow it to publish a hard copy version of the Seniors Card Directory.

Locum Services for Aged Care Facilities

A re-elected ACT Labor Government will provide \$484,000 per year for an "in-hours" locum medical service to complement the current out of hours, Canberra Afterhours Locum Medical Service. GPs are fully occupied during business hours, making it difficult to provide home visits or services for people in residential aged care facilities. This new service will provide services for this population group which will ensure that people get services where they live.